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STEPHEN MILLS' *HAMLET* OPENS BALLET AUSTIN'S 2023/24 SEASON

CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED AUDIENCE FAVORITE SEPT. 15-17

AUSTIN, Texas (August 7, 2023) – Ballet Austin opens the 2023/24 Season with an exploration of revenge, betrayal, and love in **Stephen Mills' *Hamlet***. An award-winning work set to the richly textured music of American composer Philip Glass, Stephen Mills' critically acclaimed ballet is a bold rendition of Shakespeare's timeless tale. Featuring innovative sets, Giorgio Armani-inspired costumes, and Mills' mesmerizing choreography, **Stephen Mills' *Hamlet*** takes to the stage of the Long Center for the Performing Arts for three performances September 15-17. Tickets for all three performances are on sale now.

A TWO-DECADE HISTORY

Heralded by *Dance Magazine* as "...sleek and sophisticated..." **Stephen Mills' *Hamlet*** is one of Mills' most licensed and traveled works, performed both across the U.S. and internationally.

Hamlet made its world premiere at Bass Concert Hall in October of 2000. Quoted by Mills as being a "defining moment" in his career, ***Hamlet*** marks Mills' first full-length production, created in his first season as Ballet Austin's Artistic Director, as well as his first full-length contemporary dance work. In addition to multiple stagings in Austin, **Stephen Mills' *Hamlet*** resides in the repertoire of: Atlanta Ballet, The Washington Ballet, BalletMet, Dayton Ballet, Milwaukee Ballet, Ohio Ballet, Eugene Ballet, Sacramento Ballet, and Ballet Augsburg in Augsburg, Germany. Oklahoma City Ballet adds **Stephen Mills' *Hamlet*** to their repertoire in October.

"I think ***Hamlet*** is one of the most special stories ever written by Shakespeare...maybe that's ever been written," Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin's Sarah & Ernest Butler Family Fund Artistic Director, explains. He continues: "***Hamlet*** has always been relevant. There are elements of each character to which everyone on earth can relate. Art helps us understand life; that's what I hope people take out of this when they leave the theatre."

A CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED MASTERPIECE

Showcasing his strengths as both a master storyteller and the recognized "bard of ballet" by ***The Washington Post***, Mills skillfully distills Shakespeare's complex, centuries-old story down to its

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key narrative elements. Through his collaborations with other notable artists, Mills creates a work that is both visually and viscerally thrilling.

Breaking from a traditional staging of the tragic play, Mills and set designer Jeffrey A. Main purposely gave the towering set no specific time or place, showing the timelessness of Shakespeare's story and themes. Metallic surfaces and translucent fabrics, expertly lit by Tony Tucci's lighting designs, help to define the mood. Mills and costume designer Christopher McCollum chose to costume the dancers in suits inspired by Giorgio Armani's designs and sleek cocktail dresses. **Stephen Mills' *Hamlet*** features a riveting compiled score of music, selected by Mills, from Philip Glass' extensive symphonic and film works, including *Violin Concerto*, *Dance Pieces* from *In The Upper Room*, and music from the films *Anima Mundi* and *Mishima*.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Awards: 5 accolades ranging from "Best Dance Concert" to "Best Dancer"

"The pace of the drama is swift, the intent of the choreography clear, the emotional impact of the performance heart-stopping."

Wilma Salisbury, *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland, OH

"Glass' music provides a backdrop of taut-nerved agitation and Mills has chosen wisely in the excerpts he incorporates here. Moreover, he has matched note to gesture like paint to a canvas."

Barbara Zuck, *The Columbus Dispatch*

"Mills knows how to take our breath away!"

Dance Informa

"To see or not to see? This time, there is no question."

Washington's Top News

Run-time: 1 hour & 20 minutes, including one 20-minute intermission

Dates: Friday, September 15 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 16 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, September 17 at 3:00 p.m.

TICKETS ON SALE

Tickets are on sale now and range from **\$15-\$99**. Visit balletaustin.org to reserve seats online, or contact Ballet Austin's Box Office at **512.476.2163**, weekdays from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. CT for personalized assistance.

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ABOUT STEPHEN MILLS

Sarah & Ernest Butler Family Fund Artistic Director

Known for his innovative and collaborative choreographic projects, Stephen Mills has dance works in the repertoires of companies across the United States and around the world. From his inaugural season as Artistic Director in 2000, Mills attracted attention from around the United States with his world-premiere production of *Hamlet*, hailed by Dance Magazine as "...sleek and sophisticated." The Washington Post recognized Ballet Austin as "one of the nation's best-kept ballet secrets" in 2004 after Ballet Austin performed Mills' world premiere of *The Taming of the Shrew*, commissioned by and performed at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. The Company was first invited to perform at the Kennedy Center in January of 2002 with the Mills production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and at The Joyce Theater in New York City in 2004. In 2005 after two years of extensive research, Mills led a community-wide human rights collaboration that culminated in the world premiere work *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project*. In 2006, *Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project* was awarded the Audrey & Raymond Maislin Humanitarian Award by the Anti-Defamation League. In September of 2013, the work made its international debut with a tour in three cities across Israel.

In 1998, Mills was the choreographer chosen to represent the United States through his work, *Ashes*, at Les Rencontres Chorégraphiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis in Paris. Most recently, Mills was awarded the Steinberg Award, the top honor at Le Festival des Arts de Saint-Sauveur International Choreographic Competition for *One / the body's grace*. Mills has created more than 40 works for companies in the United States and abroad. His ballets are in the repertoires of such companies as Hong Kong Ballet, Ballet Augsburg, American Ballet Theatre Studio Company, Atlanta Ballet, Milwaukee Ballet, Washington Ballet, Cuballet in Havana, Cuba, BalletMet Columbus, Dayton Ballet, Sarasota Ballet, Ballet Pacifica, Dallas Black Dance Theater, Louisville Ballet, Nashville Ballet, Colorado Ballet, Texas Ballet Theater, The Sacramento Ballet, and Dance Kaleidoscope. He has worked in collaboration with such luminaries as the eight-time Grammy Award-winning band, Asleep at the Wheel, Shawn Colvin, and internationally renowned flamenco artist José Greco II.

As a dancer Mills performed with a wide variety of companies such as the world-renowned Harkness Ballet and The American Dance Machine under the direction of Lee Theodore. He also performed with the Cincinnati Ballet and The Indianapolis Ballet Theatre before becoming a part of Ballet Austin. Mills has danced principal roles in the Balanchine repertoire, as well as works by Choo-San Goh, John Butler, Ohad Naharin, Vicente Nebrada, Domy Reiter-Soffer, and Mark Dendy.

In addition to his work as a choreographer, Mills is a master teacher committed to developing dancers. He has been invited as guest faculty at many pre-professional academies including Jacob's Pillow, Goucher College, Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing Arts in Dallas, The Virginia School of the Arts, The New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, Stephens

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College and Point Park University in Pittsburgh. Mills is a member of the national dance service organization Dance / USA and has served both in leadership roles and on the Board of Trustees for the organization.

ABOUT BALLET AUSTIN

As distinctive and dynamic as the city it calls home, Ballet Austin welcomes audiences near and far to participate in its “classically innovative” vision for the creation of original artworks, classical ballet instruction, and life-long health and wellness through dance and fitness. With a rich history spanning six decades, acclaimed productions, a commitment to creating access to programs, and a large, classical ballet academy, the organization is poised for an even greater future. From their home at the Butler Dance Education Center in downtown Austin, Ballet Austin and Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin’s Sarah & Ernest Butler Family Fund artistic director, actively engage the community, dancers, and audiences alike. The New York *Times* proclaims Ballet Austin “a company with big ambitions” originating work that is “absorbing.” For additional information on Ballet Austin and to purchase tickets and classes, visit balletaustin.org

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